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TL1503-11

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COMMISSION ON HUMAN RIGHTS

SUB-COMMISSION ON PREVENTION OF
DISCRIMINATION AND PROTECTION
OF MINORITIES

FORTIETH SESSION

AGENDA ITEM 9

THE SITUATION IN EAST TIMOR

SPEAKER : ANSELMO APARICIO

DATE : 22nd. AUGUST 1988

Mr Chairperson,
Distinguished members of the Sub-Commission,

This is the second time this session that I have taken the floor in order that the question of the fundamental rights of the people of East Timor is not forgotten. Four days ago my voice trembled as I spoke on Item 6, as it was the first time that I had spoken freely about what I and my people had suffered. The presence of the Indonesian military paralyses any exercise of the rights of the Timorese.

Mr Chairperson,
Ladies and gentlemen,

Today I would like to tell you what is happening in my country regarding conditions of detention and the administration of justice.

There are prisons everywhere in the land. Some are already well-known worldwide - sadly they are famous for the bad treatment and torture inflicted on prisoners there. The ICRC has already visited the prisons in Dili, Komarca and Be-Kora as well as the prison of Cipinang in Jakarta where many Timorese are detained, so far from their families.

Most prisons are, however, inside the country, where the red berêts (kopassus) are, in military garrisons at the level of the district (kodim) and the sub-district (koramil). The ICRC has never succeeded in obtaining permission to visit these prisons. My Timorese brothers, before being sent to the prison of Komarca, were tortured in military detention centres. They were given electric shocks, kicked, burned on their faces and genitals with cigarettes; their toenails were torn off and they were brutally beaten.

Those who did not disappear and were not killed have the chance of making it to the prisons of Dili where they are again submitted to interrogations, threats and other ill-treatment.

Women prisoners are frequently raped by Indonesian soldiers and officers as well as, like other prisoners, undergoing all sorts of physical and psychological torture.

I know the cases of Maria Lidia Boavida and Benedita well. I remember also the case of a woman who was made pregnant by the Indonesian soldiers' abuses at Komarca prison. Her daughter was my pupil at school. Such cases are not rare.

Mr Chairperson,

There are two types of detainees in East Timor - those who are never judged and those who are.

It must be noted at the outset that those who have been judged are but a minority of those who are imprisonned and tortured. Moreover, the first judgement took place only as late as 1984, that is, nine years after the Indonesian invasion. A third of our people, nearly 200'000 of them, had already been decimated.

The police threaten detainees in order to obtain written confessions as proof of the accusations the police have made. In particular, they tell them that if they are not judged they will never be freed and will never be allowed to see their families again. Then, to get proof that will stand up in court, the police obtain confessions which have involved detainees giving evidence against each other. All those taken to court were convicted. Only one appealed, because most of them are unaware of the procedures. In any case, it would be useless : their defense lawyers in court are always the same three women, who practice is Kupang (Indonesian Timor), appointed by the court, and who know nothing about the people that they supposedly are "defending". Indeed, the defendants and their lawyers meet for the first time in court, during the trial.

Mr. Chairperson,
Ladies and gentlemen,

During the last few months, the Indonesian authorities have set free most of the people detained in Dili. I would like to draw your attention to the conditions that await these Timorese. They are threatened in order that they not tell anyone of what they went through during their detention. They are also forced to present themselves weekly or monthly for years, to the military authorities (korem, koramil) and this is because they are supposed to have become spies for the occupiers. Every time they present themselves, they have to tell of anything suspect they have noticed around them.

Mr Chairperson,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

I cannot end without mentionning the issue of prisoners of war. Timorese men and women who are captured during fighting are tortured to death. Those who are interned in hospital must survive until the military consider that they can not impart any more useful information - then they are abandonned to die in the most horrific circumstances.

Mr Chairperson,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

I still have a lot to tell of the sufferings and violations that my people are undergoing. I will only say that the people of East Timor is living a situation of prisoners who have not been brought to justice. I can say so from my own experience. Every day one fears interrogations, maltreatment and imprisonment. I thank you for your attention and request you to listen and respond to the appeal of my people, its thirst for justice and its hope for action by the international community.

Thank you Mr Chairperson.